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THE  
INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

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A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION OF  
KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO, ON 2nd OCT., 1878,

By REV. PROF. MACLAREN.



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"CANADA PRESBYTERIAN" OFFICE, JORDAN STREET.  
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## INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

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IN taking up the inspiration of Scripture, the question which comes before us is the degree of authority we are warranted in ascribing to the sacred writings. It pre-supposes that a measure of authority is due to them which does not belong to ordinary human compositions. It is not, therefore, a subject which we require to discuss with avowed unbelievers. It concerns only those who accept the Scriptures as, in some sense, the record of a supernatural revelation. And, as the Scriptures supply the only *data* by which their inspiration can be judged, it is evident that we have no common ground of reasoning with those that reject their voice.

Two positions must be held as settled before the consideration of the inspiration of Scripture is in order, viz.: (1) that there is a personal God, the Creator and Moral Governor of the universe; and (2) that He has made a supernatural revelation of himself to mankind of which the Scriptures are a record historically trustworthy. These positions, covering substantially all that the Christian apologist seeks to establish, while they stop short of the assertion of the inspiration of Scripture, are essential to its rational discussion. Until these positions are granted, it is as hopeless and as useless attempting to prove the inspiration of

Scripture, as it would be to discuss the military tactics of Napoleon with a man who denied that the Corsican had ever led an army to battle. If there is no personal God, whatever involves the supernatural must be ruled out as impossible and absurd. It scarcely admits of question that the reason why many who examine the inspiration of Scripture, fail to recognize it, is that their minds are enslaved with the notion that the supernatural is impossible, and that whatever therefore involves it must either be set aside or explained away. But the only logical basis for such a pre-supposition is speculative Pantheism or Atheism. For, if there is a personal God, the Creator and Moral Governor of the Universe, the supernatural must be acknowledged, not only as possible; but as a fact. It is involved in creation. And how often the Most High has been pleased to exert his power supernaturally is a question to be determined, not by blind pre-possession, but by a careful examination of evidence. The existence of a personal God renders a supernatural revelation possible, but the fact that such a revelation has been made and recorded in the Holy Scriptures, with as much accuracy as we ascribe to the best class of human writings, must be established before we are prepared to take up the inspiration of the sacred volume. This, we presume, has been done to your satisfaction, when you were studying the evidences of Christianity. You have satisfied yourselves that God has not only made a supernatural revelation of himself to men, but that we have a record of it in the Scriptures which is historically trustworthy; or, in other words, the Scriptures were written by men of competent information and thorough honesty, and consequently, the revelation given to them must be held to be recorded in Scripture with as much correctness as we attribute to the best class of human writings. The acceptance of the Scriptures as a record,

historically trustworthy, of a supernatural revelation, carries with it a decision, substantially complete, as to the books to which this character is ascribed, and, also, as to the fact that they have been transmitted to us with at least as much purity as distinguishes the works of ancient authors which we accept as genuine and authentic. When we have reached this point, to which you are supposed to be carried by your studies in Apologetics, we are prepared to take a step in advance, and ask whether we are not warranted from an examination of the contents of Scripture to claim that the record was not only made by men of competent information and thorough integrity, but by holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We may enquire whether the sacred writers were left to themselves to record as best they could the mysteries of divine revelation, or whether they were guided supernaturally to embody correctly in human language the revelation which they had received. This is the question of inspiration. In this lecture all we shall attempt is to state what we regard as involved in an adequate doctrine of inspiration, indicate a line of argument by which it is established, and answer some of the more common objections urged against it.

I. We shall not discuss the various theories which have been invented to explain, or to explain away, inspiration. They proceed largely upon the assumption that the mode of inspiration admits of explanation. This we regard as entirely inadmissible. All we can know of anything supernatural is the fact. The mode of the supernatural, if such language has any meaning, is known only to God. Our doctrine of inspiration must be reached, not by theorising, but by a careful examination of the contents of the Bible. The facts and phenomena of the Scriptures must determine whether the writer wrote with or without supernatural guidance. One fact which strikes us in perusing the

Bible is that it was written by men. It carries upon its face the impress of the distinct style and character of various human authors as plainly as any collection of books. It bears all the marks of having been produced by its numerous writers in the full exercise of their natural powers. Each book is as perfectly human in its individuality of structure and style as if God had nothing to do with its composition. No view of inspiration which does not fully recognize this fact can be satisfactory. But, as we read in the Sacred Volume, the evidence of a second fact forces itself on our attention, viz., the Bible is also the authorship of God. Its human authors wrote under supernatural guidance. If we recognize its writers as honest and intelligent men, we are compelled to believe that a higher intelligence than their own guided their hands. These facts do not contradict each other, although we may not be able to explain how they meet in harmony in the same composition. Each is established by its own evidence. There are two statements warranted, as we judge, by the facts and phenomena of Scripture, which appear to us to contain all that is essential to an adequate doctrine of inspiration, viz.:

(1) The sacred writers intended to give to mankind in their writings only what God had supernaturally given to them; and (2), God enabled them by His special aid to do what they intended. In one word, the Scriptures have been so written that God has made Himself responsible for their contents. They are a supernatural record of a supernatural revelation. When, in the first statement, we assert that all that the sacred penmen designed to put on record was the communication of truth which had been supernaturally given to them by God, we do not say that all they felt themselves impelled to write was a revelation from God in the highest sense of the term. It was not all new truth before unknown to man. What we mean is



that the contents of Scripture were designed to be in such a sense from God that He would be as truly responsible for them as an author is for the subject-matter of a book which he writes. In order to this responsibility, originality of matter is not necessary. When an author sends forth a new work some of his ideas and facts may be new, others may be presented in new relations, and not a few of them may have been presented in substantially the same manner by others, but he deems it essential to his design to incorporate them in his book, or perhaps to stamp them with his authority. But this complex whole, in which things new and old mingle, he makes his own, and he becomes responsible for every part of it to the extent to which he sanctions it. In like manner, whatever may be the character of the truth to be recorded in the sacred Scriptures—whether something made known for the first time, old truth presented in new relations, or familiar truth gathered by the writers under Divine guidance from common report, existing books, or public archives—the whole moulded by Divine wisdom into a complex communication of truth where every part ministers to the design of the Divine author, was what the Scripture writers intended to give to the world. The entire subject matter which they designed to embody in their writings was God's message to men. When, in the second statement, we assert that the sacred writers were enabled by God's special aid to do what they intended we complete the idea of the Divine authorship of the Holy Scriptures. This gives us a supernatural revelation embodied supernaturally in human language. It is not enough for us to know that the truth was lodged in all its purity in the minds of the sacred writers, unless we are certified also that they were enabled to transfer it without error to the written page where alone we have access to it. An author must

not only have correct ideas in his mind, but he must clothe them in such words as are fitted to convey them clearly and effectively to the minds of his readers. Those who are familiar with the endless disputes which arise from inaccurate language are not likely to undervalue this portion of an author's work. It may also be easily seen that in the case of writers subject to the prejudices, passions, and infirmities which cling even to good men we have poor security that, if left to themselves, they would not err seriously in attempting to give expression to the unfamiliar mysteries of a new revelation. The admission of such an undefinable amount of error in the record, would certainly deprive us of many of the benefits of a supernatural revelation as a rule of faith and life. For in every appeal to the Holy Scriptures, the bewildering doubt assails us whether the very words to which we appeal are not rather the product of human imperfection than of divine wisdom. This is a very different thing from a measure of uncertainty as to the correct reading of particular texts. In the one case the doubt can always be localized, and the uncertainty of one text can be supplemented by the undoubted teaching of another. In the other case the same uncertainty hangs over all, and in no instance can we be assured that we are not, at least to some extent, building upon what is human as if it were divine.

There are two features which necessarily distinguish any book or utterance of which God, in the sense we have defined, is the author, viz.: infallible truth and divine authority. Whatever shows that either of these characteristics attaches to any word spoken or book written by man proves its inspiration. These are attributes which can be predicated only of divine words. Whatever, therefore, makes it manifest that the Scriptures are clothed with such unerring truth and supreme authority that it is sin to disbelieve what

they teach, or to disobey what they enjoin, establishes their inspiration in the only sense in which Christians need contend for it.

II. It is admitted on both sides of this controversy that the Scriptures are the only authoritative source of information as to their own inspiration. Ellis, a leading Unitarian divine of New England, and a strong opponent of plenary inspiration, declares "that the prevailing popular view of the authority, the inspiration, and the infallibility of the Bible has been superstitiously attached to it, that it did not originate in the Bible, is not claimed by the contents of the Bible, and cannot be sustained by any fair dealing with them." (Half-Cent. Unit. Contr., p. 239.) Jowett, in his contribution to the notorious "Essays and Reviews," says that "the nature of inspiration can only be known from the examination of Scripture. There is no other source to which we can turn for information." (p. 381.) And he boldly asserts that "for any of the higher or supernatural views of inspiration there is no foundation in the Gospels or Epistles." (p. 379.) This is a plain issue. What idea do the Scriptures give of themselves? Do they claim infallible truth and divine authority for their contents? Do they represent God as their author? In thus appealing to the Scriptures for the evidence of their own inspiration, there is no reasoning in a circle, as some worthy divines have dreamed. We do not seek to prove their inspiration by tacitly taking their inspiration for granted. For we do not appeal to the sacred writers as inspired, but as the credible historians of a divine revelation. We do not quote them as infallible, but as honest and trustworthy writers. Were the appeal made to a few isolated expressions employed by certain of the sacred writers, it might not be sufficient to establish the inspiration of the Bible. For in writers historically trustworthy we re-

cognize the possibility of a measure of unintentional mistake, and perchance these isolated utterances might be the result of honest mistake or slovenly writing. But if it can be shown, as we think it can, that the claims to inspiration, direct and indirect, put forward by the sacred writers are so clear and numerous, and the testimonies to the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures so emphatic and various that we cannot regard the authors as honest and intelligent men, unless in very deed they wrote under supernatural guidance, then we think we can construct a rational argument for the inspiration of Scripture from writings which, up to this stage, have been viewed only as historically trustworthy. We readily acknowledge that the supernatural or miraculous should never be admitted as a fact, until proper evidence is adduced. Whoever asserts the existence of any special manifestation of the supernatural may be reasonably asked to prove it. But should any one feel inclined to lay stress upon this general presumption against the supernatural, it is well to remind him that in the case before us it is counter-balanced by a presumption springing from the existence of a supernatural revelation. If God has made a supernatural revelation of himself to man, as all with whom we conduct this discussion admit, there is surely a strong presumption that He would guide the sacred writers to put it correctly on record. The revelation was not designed merely for the private benefit of the prophet who originally received it; it was intended for others who could have access to it only in the Holy Scriptures. And surely it does not look like divine wisdom and benevolence to give a supernatural revelation to man, and then permit it to become so mixed with error in the record of it, that we shall ever be in danger of mistaking human blunders for divine revelations. We submit, therefore, that the presumption is in favor



of a supernatural record of a supernatural revelation.

Passing from the presumptive argument to the evidence, we confess to a difficulty which we feel, but it is not the difficulty of discovering evidence, but of arranging and condensing it within reasonable compass. It has been well remarked that "for the most part, if not universally, the penmen of Scripture were clothed with a public and official character, sufficiently known to those for whom they wrote, and implying both a divine commission and an extraordinary inspiration."—(Bannerman on Inspir., p. 288.) It was not, therefore, necessary that they should indulge very frequently in direct assertions of their own inspiration. We shall see, however, that occasionally, when circumstances seemed to demand it, they did make explicit statements. A large proportion of the most striking evidence for the inspiration of Scripture is found in indirect and incidental testimonies which do not admit of very compendious exhibition. Notwithstanding this difficulty, we hope, even in this lecture, to adduce sufficient evidence to show that "the prevailing popular view of the authority, the inspiration, and the infallibility of the Bible" has not "been superstitiously attached to it," but on the contrary, is required by a fair dealing with the contents of the Holy Scriptures.

1. *The phenomenon of inspiration is undeniable.* This is our first position. Many who deny that the whole Bible is characterized by infallible truth and divine authority readily admit that certain portions of it are distinguished by plenary inspiration. But apart from such concessions, we think it is impossible for those who recognize the credibility of the sacred writers to maintain successfully that there have been no examples of such inspiration as we claim for the Holy Scriptures. It must be conceded that the words of

the Lord Jesus Christ, as spoken by him, were distinguished by infallible truth and divine authority. We do not speak of the record of His discourses in the pages of the Evangelists, but of the words as they fell from His lips. If we accept the writers of the New Testament as the credible historians of a supernatural revelation, the view which they give of the person of Christ, and of the manner in which He was endowed with the fulness of the Spirit's gifts, renders it certain that error could not have mingled with His words. They are an example, unique no doubt, but still an example, of human words clothed with infallible truth and divine authority. This, however, is not the only example of the phenomenon which admits of no reasonable question. There are many special ~~oracles~~ which are introduced in a manner, or run in a style, which places their plenary inspiration beyond dispute. We are forced either to accept their inspiration or to maintain that the writer is not trustworthy. When we find Jeremiah describing his book as "The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah \* \* \* \* \* To whom the word of the Lord came," etc., and introducing his message by the statement, "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying," v. 4, and commencing a second message with the words, v. 13, "And the word of the Lord came unto me a second time, saying"—can we suppose Jeremiah to claim anything less than that the words which he has written are at least in these particular instances the words of the Most High. In the 36th chapter Jeremiah is instructed by God "to take a roll of a book and write therein all the words which I have spoken against Israel," and when the prophet has obeyed we find the product referred to interchangeably as "the words of Jeremiah," and as "the words of the Lord," vs. 10-11. Can any one who regards Jeremiah as a thoroughly trustworthy writer fail to recognize this as an example

of plenary inspiration? And if we repose confidence in the integrity of the sacred writers, how can we refuse this character to oracles introduced with the familiar formula, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," or confirmed with the declaration, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Numerous examples will readily occur to the readers of the Bible where at least certain passages are so marked out that no fair dealing with the language can eliminate the idea of plenary inspiration from them. We think that it is important to emphasize the position that the phenomenon of inspiration is undeniable. For whenever it is made clear that in certain instances, at least, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," then a very large proportion of the objections commonly urged against inspiration falls to the ground. When inspiration is established as a fact it is a very bootless task reasoning against it, either as improbable, impossible, or as inconsistent with the individuality of the sacred writers. It only remains to ascertain the extent to which inspiration can be predicated of the Holy Scriptures.

2. *Inspiration can manifestly be predicated very extensively of the Old Testament.* This appears from the prophetic authorship of its books and from the claims which its writers put forth. (1.) It is certain that most of the books of the Old Testament were written by *prophets*; and while we cannot adduce direct evidence to show that all the books of the ancient canon were written by men of this order, there is at least manifestly a high degree of probability that they were all, as the ancient Jews believed, written by prophets. At present we do not lay stress on this probability, but confine ourselves to what is capable of clear proof. There are marks of the existence, throughout the whole period during which the Old Testament was produced, of an order of men honored to hold special

intercourse with God and receive supernatural revelations from Him, and who were formally accredited by the Most High as His agents, whom he authorized, in their official character, to speak and act for Him. The relation which Aaron is represented as sustaining to Moses brings out distinctly the relation in which the prophet stood to God, and the authority due to his words, whether spoken or written. When Moses was unwilling to bear the divine message to Egypt, the Lord, having reminded him that his brother Aaron could speak well, said to him, "Thou shalt speak unto him and put words in his mouth." \* \* \* \* "He shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God."—Ex. iv. 15, 16. Again we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a god unto Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."—Ex. vii. 1. What Aaron said to Pharaoh had the authority of Moses, and so what the prophet, in his official capacity, said to the people had the authority of God. He spoke as God's mouth. God made Himself responsible for the prophet's utterances. When it was known that the prophet stood in this relation to God, all that was necessary to certify men that a book was given by inspiration of God was the assurance that it was the official work of one of the prophetic order. We assume that God did in various ways give public sanction to certain men as prophets by which their cotemporaries could be assured of the genuineness of their prophetic character, and thereby of the divine authority of their writings.

That the vast majority of the books of the Old Testament were written by prophets can be easily shown. They were all familiarly referred to and quoted by Christ under the well-known Jewish divisions, Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, Luke xiv. 44. That



the Pentateuch was, with very trifling exceptions, written by Moses, nothing that modern destructive criticism has been able to adduce need make us doubt. And that Moses was a prophet cannot be denied in face of the express language of Scripture, "And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved"—Hos. xii. 13. And the whole record of his legislation and life bears ample testimony to the sobriety of the statement with which it is closed, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face"—Deut. xxxiv. 10. That the second division, which is expressly called "the prophets" by Jesus Christ, was written by prophets can scarcely be successfully denied. What God said to Jeremiah might have been said from any of them from Joshua downwards, "Lo, I have put my words in thy mouth."—Jer. i. 9. Shall we then refuse to acknowledge the prophetic character of that division named from its first book, the Psalms? The apostle Peter expressly testifies that David was a prophet, Acts. ii. 30, and he affirms that the Scriptures must needs be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David, Acts i. 16. It is true that we cannot adduce direct evidence that all parts of the Hagiographa, as this division was frequently called, were written by prophets; but we find that Asaph and Daniel are both ranked by our Lord as prophets, Matt. xiii. 35, and Matt. xxiv. 15, while in Hebrews iii. 7, 9, an anonymous Psalm is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. And not only are the Proverbs of Solomon repeatedly quoted in the New Testament with usual formula, "it is written" (Rom. iii. 15, and Rom. xii. 19, 20), but once in terms that show that the words are the very words of God, James iv. 10. To this we may add the fact that the Apostle Paul, on one occasion, refers to the Old Testament Scriptures generally under the title of "the

prophetic Scriptures"—Rom. xvi. 26. It was doubtless very largely due to the evidence for the prophetic authorship of the books of the Old Testament that the Jews, in the time of our Lord, believed universally in their inspiration.

(2.) The writers of the Old Testament repeatedly use language which involves a direct claim to inspiration. This claim is advanced in many forms, and in terms so general that no reason can be assigned why it should be restricted to any particular portion of their writings. How often do we find such language employed by them in reference to their own statements as this: "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," "Thus saith the Lord," "Hear the word of the Lord?" Nearly all the prophets, again and again, employ phraseology which indicates that the Lord spoke by them. "The vision which Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, "Jeremiah, what seest thou?" "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzi," etc. "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea." "The word of the Lord that came to Micah." And almost the entire legislation of Moses has the Divine authorship stamped upon its language with equal distinctness. As we read the Pentateuch we encounter continually the words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying." It is true that there are books of the Old Testament in which no such direct claims to inspiration as we have cited are put forth. But there is a silent tone of authority pervading even these which is compatible only with the idea of their inspiration. In addition to this, the fact that they were written in the Sacred Collection, which the Israelites guarded with such jealous care, is itself a tacit claim to the same character as distinguished the other portions of the ancient canon. If the writers

who put forward these claims are regarded as the credible historians of a supernatural revelation, we cannot avoid the conclusion that a very large portion of the Old Testament was given by inspiration of God.

3. Advancing now another step, we remark, that *the testimony of the New Testament establishes the inspiration of the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures.* This includes the testimony of Christ Himself, which, with all who admit His divine character and mission, should be decisive. It includes also the testimony of the writers of the New Testament, which has a two-fold character and value:—(1) It may be regarded as presenting the doctrine of their Master at second-hand, and (2) it may be viewed as the credible record of a supernatural revelation of which they were the recipients. In order that the full force of this argument may be felt we must bear in mind the contrast between the treatment accorded to the Old Testament Scriptures by Christ and the writers of the New Testament, and that which flows naturally from any of the modified theories of inspiration. All these theories deny the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and they are introduced expressly to account for the presence of an undefined and undefinable amount of error in the sacred page. It is evident that no man who had embraced any of these theories could legitimately treat the Scriptures as an infallible standard of faith and life. He might appeal to them as investing with a high degree of probability the sentiments which they sanctioned. He might quote them with much confidence for their leading facts, and perhaps also for their more prominent doctrines; but that he should ever build upon the mere form of their phraseology, or draw inferences from what is implied as well as what is expressed, would be impossible. (1.) Now it is to be observed that in all the quotations made by Christ and the writers of the New Testament

from the Old, there is *no reserve made for error*, no attempt made to distinguish divine truth from human mistakes. The Old Testament Scriptures are quoted, by our Lord and His Apostles just as they are quoted to-day, by those who believe in their plenary inspiration. "It is written" was deemed by our Lord a sufficient answer to the temptations of Satan, the cavils of Scribes and Pharisees, and the doubts of His own Disciples. It never occurred to him that a thing might be written in Scripture, and after all be a mere blunder. His mind is never haunted with the terrible uncertainty resulting from such a notion. He ever deals with the Old Testament in the spirit of His own maxim, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." The same style of quotation characterizes the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. They never question the infallible truth or divine authority of the ancient Scriptures. On the contrary, they take for granted that "the Scriptures must be fulfilled;" and they constantly appeal to them as a decisive standard of truth and duty. If, therefore, the writers of the New Testament are regarded either as fair exponents of the mind of Christ, or as the credible historians of a true revelation from God, their testimony to the inspiration of the Old Testament is conclusive. Had the quotations and references made by our Lord been few, the thought might have found entrance that, in some unaccountable manner, the historian had forgotten the words of his Master, but when we discover that the quotations made by Christ Himself may be counted by scores, and that they are recorded not by one, but by four evangelists, then every principle of historical evidence must be overthrown, if our Lord did not sanction the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament. And when we add to this, that in all the quotations made from the Old Testament Scriptures in the New, —quotations numbered, not by scores, but by hundreds,



the writers uniformly appeal to them as to an infallible standard, what can be thought of the modesty of a writer who ventures to declare, "that the prevailing popular view of the authority, the inspiration, and the infallibility of the Bible has been superstitiously attached to it?" It is a superstition which we share with Christ and His Apostles. This argument gathers additional force from the consideration that Christ and His apostles addressed a people who already believed in the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament, and who must have understood them as endorsing that dogma. That such was the belief of the Jews, in the time of Christ, is put beyond dispute by the language of the writers of the Apocrypha, and by the express testimony of Philo and Josephus.—*Vide* Lee on Insp. p. 63-68. We may, indeed, be reminded that the Jews also attached a superstitious reverence and authority to traditions. But did our Lord use language fitted to foster the delusion? On the contrary, we find these traditions denounced in the severest terms, while the law, in its purity, was vindicated from the false glosses wherewith it had been overlaid. But did our Lord ever charge the Jews with superstitious reverence for the Holy Scriptures? Did he ever denounce them for their Bibliolatry? Nay, verily, the very gravamen of his charge against them was that they had made void the Word through their traditions: Mark vii. 15; Matt. xv. 6. (2.) The *express statements* of Christ, and of the writers of the New Testament, prove the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled:" Matt. v. 17, 18. No one surely can imagine that our Lord, in using such language, did not imply His belief

in the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament. He expressly calls the Scriptures, which the Jews had made void through their traditions, "The Word of God." We find Him grounding an argument upon a single word, and that used in an uncommon sense, because, "the Scriptures cannot be broken." "If He called them gods to whom the Word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken:" John x. 35. He recognizes the usual threefold division of the books of the Old Testament, and attributes the same unerring truth to their contents, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me:" Luke xxiv. 44. In the New Testament the ancient Scriptures are, on several occasions, referred to as, "the oracles of God," terms which indicate that "they are in word, as well as in sense, divine communications." In 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, the Apostle Paul, whose remarkable conversion and general character stamp him certainly as a credible witness of a supernatural revelation, declares expressly, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," etc. Alford and Ellicott propose, in a somewhat hesitating manner, to translate the words "every divinely inspired Scripture is also profitable," but even this harsh rendering does not affect the argument, for the reference must still be to the Holy Scriptures spoken of in the previous verse, which Timothy had known from childhood. According to the ordinary translation, Paul asserts categorically, the inspiration of all Scripture, and according to the other, he mentions it as a thing which is to be taken for granted and proceeded upon. According to either view, Paul must be held as sanctioning the idea that Divine inspiration is a common property of the Old

Testament Scriptures. We are aware that an attempt has been made to evade the force of this testimony by translating the words, "every writing divinely inspired is also profitable," etc. But not only does this represent the Apostle as introducing a statement entirely irrelevant to the matter in hand, but also as using the word *graphe* (Scripture) in a sense of which there is no example in the New Testament. For of the fifty times in which the word occurs, either in the singular or the plural, in the New Testament, it is used in all save two, unless we except this text, as a kind of proper name for the Old Testament. The two exceptions are significant. The one is where Peter applies the word to St. Paul's Epistle, along with the other Scriptures, 2 Peter iii. 16. The other is an instance of a similar kind, where Paul quotes two passages, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, under the common title of Scripture. That the word *graphe* was used as a kind of proper noun in the New Testament, like our word Scripture, admits of no question. It was employed usually to denote the sacred writings of the Old Testament, although at the date of this epistle, the *usus loquendi* had become so far modified, as to admit of the application of the word to the canonical writings of the New Testament. The testimony of 2 Peter i. 20, 21, is in some respects more decisive: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." What language could more clearly assert the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament? After reading these explicit testimonies from Christ and the writers of the New Testament, which might have been greatly multiplied, it seems a phenomenon which demands explanation, that an Oxford professor could deliberately write, that "for any of the higher or supernatural views of inspira-

tion there is no foundation in the Gospels or Epistles."

(3.) Christ and the writers of the New Testament *found arguments upon the very words* of the Old Testament in a manner which demonstrated their belief in its inspiration. The answer which our Lord returned to the cavils of the Sadducees in reference to the resurrection of the dead, is a striking example in point. He refutes their objection by an appeal to the fact that long after the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God had, in His words to Moses, represented himself as the God of these patriarchs, and our Lord reasons that as God is not the God of the dead but of the living, they must be still alive. The whole force of this argument is based on the precise collocation of words employed in Ex. iii. 6: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now suppose a Sadducee had replied, as one of his modern successors doubtless would, that Moses was left to his own powers to record, as best he could, facts with which he was personally cognizant, and that by a slip of memory he had no doubt substituted the idea of the present for the past, and that the words really used by Jehovah probably were, "I *was* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," what would have become of the argument, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living?" And if the Scriptures are not so inspired as to be characterized by infallible truth and divine authority, what possible answer could be returned to such a rejoinder? On the same occasion, our Lord silenced the Pharisees by an argument founded on the use of the personal pronoun "my," in one of the Psalms,—an argument depending entirely on the unerring accuracy with which the Psalm is worded: Matt. xxii. 41. We have seen also that he reasons from an uncommon sense attached, in one of the Psalms to the word "gods," because "the Scrip-



tures cannot be broken :” John x. 35. And the Apostle Paul is so fully convinced of the plenary inspiration of the ancient canon that he bases an argument, in Gal. iii. 16, on the distinction between the singular and the plural, in an Old Testament promise. The manner in which Old Testament predictions are verified by Christ and His apostles, as fulfilled, opens up a very interesting line of evidence, on which we cannot enter.

4. *The inspiration of the New Testament is sustained by evidence not less satisfactory.* Those who admit the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament, are not likely to question the infallible truth and divine authority of the New. The tendency, in certain quarters, is rather in the opposite direction. The presumptive argument in favour of the inspiration of the New Testament is certainly stronger than that which prepares us to welcome the inspiration of the Old. For, not only is there the general presumption that God, having given to men a supernatural revelation, will ensure them the full benefit of the gift by enshrining it in a correct record, but there is another springing from the character of the later revelation. If any revelation is deemed worthy of an inspired record, surely it must be that, so full and perfect, which has been introduced in these last days by God’s Son from Heaven. But passing to the evidence, we discover, as we examine the New Testament, (1) that the writers claim *co-ordinate authority* with those of the Old Testament. Not only does the same calm tone of authority pervade their writings, but we find the Apostle Peter combining in the same sentence the words of the prophets and the commandments of the apostles, as equally entitled to the thoughtful submission of Christians—“That ye may be mindful of the words that were spoken before of the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the

Lord and Saviour:" 2 Pet. iii. 2. In the same chapter Peter ranks the epistles of Paul with the other Scriptures, as possessed of the same essential character and authority. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction:" 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. What language could more clearly claim co-ordinate authority for Paul's epistles and the Old Testament? It is indeed highly probable that, as Peter regarded Paul's epistles as Scripture, he included in "the other Scriptures" all the canonical books of the New Testament, written at the date of this epistle, or nearly the whole of the New Testament. In 1 Tim. v. 18, Paul ranks as Scripture two passages, the one from the Old Testament, and the other found only in the Gospels—Matt. x. 10, and Luke x. 7.

(2.) The *apostolic authorship* of the greater part of the books of the New Testament proves their inspiration. All the writers of the New Testament, except Mark and Luke, were apostles. And the writings of these evangelists were unquestionably received into the canon, while the Church was under the superintendence of the apostles, and at a period when it was richly endowed with miraculous gifts, and, among others, with "the discerning of spirits" (*vide* 1 Cor. xii. 10, and 1 Cor. xiv. 37), and we cannot believe that, if the other books of the New Testament were inspired, these could have been accepted as canonical, unless the Church had regarded them as clothed with the same authority. Indeed, the placing of them by common consent in the canon is itself evidence that they were viewed as of equal authority with the other sacred writings.

What is the authority due to the writings of the Apostles? As in the case of prophets, this depends on their gifts. What were the gifts of an apostle? We believe that the New Testament warrants us in answering, infallibility in teaching and ruling, and the power of conferring the Holy Ghost in his miraculous bestowments. These were the gifts essential to the office, without which a man could no more be an apostle than he could be a prophet without inspiration. The very name, *apostles*, by which Jesus designated the twelve, indicates that they bore a very special commission from Him. And when we associate this, as has been done by Christ Himself, with His own title as "the sent of God," or, as Paul expresses it, "the apostle and high priest of our profession," it indicates an analogy between the relation they sustain to him, as his duly qualified and accredited representatives in the world, and that which he sustained to the Father. Hence he could say, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," John xx. 21. In the first commission which He gave to His apostles, He assured them of the miraculous aid of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for their work. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you," Matt. x. 17, 20. And in John's Gospel, 16th chapter, where we have the fullest intimations of the endowments to be granted to the Apostles, we find that the Spirit is promised to them as a spirit of truth, to bring Christ's words to remembrance, to teach them all things, to lead them into all truth, and to show them things to come. And these remarkable gifts were promised, not for a special season, but to abide with them permanently. And as peculiar gifts were necessary for their work, they were strictly forbidden attempting to discharge the special functions of their office, until these promises were fulfilled. They were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem, until they were "en-

duced with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49. Perhaps, however, the nature of the gifts promised can be best seen in the actual history of the Apostles, and in the claims which they themselves put forth. To these claims we must now pass.

(3.) The *claims* which the Apostles put forth imply inspiration. Here it should be noted, at the outset, that the Apostles claim, as might be expected, equal authority for their spoken and written words, and for both they demand the right which infallible truth and divine authority alone possess to control, without reserve, the faith and life of Christians. "Therefore, brethren," Paul writes, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by Word or our epistle:" 2 Thess. ii. 15. See also 1 Cor. xv. 1, and John xx. 31. Accepting the writers of the New Testament as credible witnesses of divine revelation, what idea do we gain of the guidance under which they wrote, and of the authority due to their words? Paul, writing of the truths which he made known to men, says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."—1 Cor. ii. 10, 13. Would it not be well for Morell and those who affirm that Apostles made no pretensions to any inspiration, save that which sprang from their spiritual development and intimate acquaintance with Christ, to inform us, what terms Paul could have employed to set forth his plenary inspiration more clear and precise than he has used, when he declares that he spoke what God had revealed to him by His Spirit, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth?" Again, in the same epistle, Paul writes, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the

things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord:" 1 Cor. xiv. 37. So confident is Paul of his inspiration that he makes the acceptance of it the virtual test by which a professed prophet is to be tried. The apostle John does the same: "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us:" 1 John iv. 6. No one in reading these passages with unbiassed mind, can fail to admit that these apostles regarded their words as clothed with infallible truth and divine authority. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul employs language which throws no uncertain light upon his inspiration: "For this cause, also, thank we God, without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe:" 1 Thess. ii. 13; *vide* also Gal. i. 6-12; 1 Thess. iv. 1, 2, 8, 15. Peter represents himself and his fellow-apostles as preaching the gospel under the guidance of the same Spirit which animated the ancient prophets, when they foretold the coming and the work of Christ. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things that are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven:" (1 Peter i. 10-13; *vide* also 2 Peter iii. 2, 15-16). The Book of Revelation which closes the New Testament canon, was not only written by an apostle, possessed, as such, of the gift of infallibility as a teacher, but the contents of the book give clear indications that John regarded it as an



inspired production. The apostle was "in the Spirit" when the record opens: (Chap. i. 10). He had a special commission from the Lord to write the book. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter:" (Chap. i. 19). It is repeatedly styled prophecy, and the respect and reverence due to an inspired production—to a work which is at once perfect and divine—are claimed for it. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy and keep those things that are written therein: (Chap. i. 3). "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book:" (Chap. xxii. 10). The closing sanctions with which the integrity of the book is guarded harmonize alone with the idea of its infallible truth and divine authority: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this work, if any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book:" (Chap. xxii. 18-19).

If the Apocalypse was written under such supernatural guidance that God is truly its author, responsible for its entire contents, if any alteration must necessarily mar its divine beauty and destroy its perfection, then we can see a fitness in these tremendous sanctions. But if the book, however excellent, is a mere human production, compassed about with the imperfections of all purely human work, could John, or any sane man with a remnant of a moral nature in him, believe that the Most High will make bare his arm to blot out of the book of life the man who shall take away some of its deformities, or that He will add to him the plagues written in this

book, should he venture to remove from it real defects?

We have only touched very slightly on the evidence which the Scriptures supply of their own inspiration. We have not referred to what is, in some respects, the most valuable of all the evidences—to those marks of divinity everywhere stamped on the sacred volume, “whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God.” Enough, however, has been adduced to show that the prevailing view of the authority, inspiration, and infallibility of the Bible has not been superstitiously attached to it, but that on the contrary, a fair examination of the statements and phenomena of the Scriptures, leads legitimately to the conviction, in which the Christian Church has rested from the beginning, that in these books we have a supernatural record of a supernatural revelation.

III. Before discussing either inspiration, or *the objections to it*, we require to determine our theological whereabouts, in order that we may attend to one thing at a time. Inspiration, as we have already shown, does not come legitimately before us, nor has it, indeed, any meaning for us, until we have reached the conviction not only that there is a personal God, but that he has made a supernatural revelation of himself to mankind of which we have a record in the Bible, which is historically trustworthy. We should not, therefore, at this stage, be required to examine any objection based on a denial of the possibility of the supernatural, or involving a rejection of the credibility of the sacred writers. These points are supposed to be settled, before we take up the precise degree of authority due to the Holy Scriptures. Time will not suffice to discuss, in detail, all the objections which come more legitimately under our consideration. It is, however, of importance to observe that a careful consideration of the doctrine of inspiration, which we have endeavored

to state and defend, obviates completely a large portion of them. We have presented it as involving a twofold authorship throughout of the sacred books. The Scriptures are at once all of man and all of God. When God gave us a revelation, what he employed was not a human hand to write down his words, or a scribe to transfer mechanically to paper what was given him. He employed a man—a man in all the fulness of his powers of memory, imagination, conscience, desires, and affections, with all his acquired literary polish, or native rudeness and vigour, as the case might be—to write in all the freedom of ordinary authorship. This human authorship was no mere fiction; it was as real as the divine. The books, therefore, are at once all human and all divine. It is evident that all the objections urged so commonly against the inspiration of Scripture, drawn from the individuality of the writers, fall to the ground as soon as this view is understood. In like manner, all objections springing from the expression, on the part of the sacred writers, of personal feelings or beliefs, or from appeals to their own knowledge or veracity, disappear the moment it is seen that the book is at once perfectly human and perfectly divine. And certainly no one who understood this view could gravely bring forward, as has been done by Guizot, (*Vide* Meds. on Christianity, p. 175) mere grammatical or literary defects, as inconsistent with the plenary inspiration of the writers of the Bible. We are satisfied that these defects have been greatly multiplied and magnified by certain writers, according to their preconceived notions, but we have no special interest in denying their existence. A man's literary culture, be it less or more, is just as much a part of himself as his memory, imagination, or reason. When God selected a channel through which His revelation might be given to the race, He took a whole man that he might speak as he

was moved by the Holy Ghost. Inspiration was not designed to secure for men a model of literary excellence, but to assure them of an unerring exhibition of truth. And no defect, which is not inconsistent with the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, can impinge on their inspiration. The view presented anticipates all the objections arising from the variety of expression employed by different historians in narrating the same facts, and from the diversity of conception under which the writers of Scripture exhibit the same truths. These are necessary manifestations of the human element. And so long as the variations are not such as would trench upon truth in an ordinary writer, they are not inconsistent with inspiration. A discourse may be reported *verbatim*, or it may be condensed and embodied in other words. But so long as the truth, which is not to be identified with the words in which it is set forth, is not interfered with, neither historical nor inspired truth is marred by the change. If a writer professed to report the exact words of a speaker and failed to do so, it would be inconsistent with truth; but where no such profession is made, all we have a right to expect is the substance of what was said.

It is surprising to find a writer, at once so learned and candid as Alford, decrying what he calls "verbal inspiration," under the idea that it implies "that every word and phrase was absolutely and separately true:" Proleg., ch. i. 6. We have seen very extreme, and, as we think, very foolish, statements made in connection with what is called verbal inspiration, but we have never encountered a writer who takes the extreme position, which Alford has described. We have never met an author who holds that Satan's words, "Ye shall not surely die," or the words of the servant, in the parable, "I knew thee that thou art an hard master," or the words of Job's friends, which are cited only to

be condemned, are "absolutely and separately true." Such an idea could certainly never have entered the mind of one who had apprehended the doctrine we have advanced. Whatever is consistent with *perfect truth* in an ordinary writer, is consistent with it in an inspired writer. And no one, surely, would impeach the truth of the narrative of a trial, because it contains the sworn testimony of a false witness. It is only when it is supposed that inspiration deprived the sacred writings of their human characteristics, that such a notion has any plausibility. The very highest doctrine of inspiration which we have ever seen, save in the caricatures of opponents, does not imply any interference with the individuality of the writer, or with his liberty to use the ordinary modes and forms of speech, at their current value. It guards him, in his writing, against the perverting influence of ignorance and bias, but binds him to no cast-iron mode of expressing his ideas.

A very simple *negative test* of inspiration may be given. Suppose all ignorance, prejudice, and bias in reference to the matter treated of, and so far as it is dealt with, absent from the mind of an uninspired writer, then ask yourself would his narrative necessarily be different from what you find in Scripture? If so, provided your judgment is correct, the Scripture account cannot be inspired. Or, to take a concrete example: Imagine the four Evangelists apart from inspiration, in actual possession of the very inscription placed over the cross, written, not as Alford says, with apparent bias, in Greek, but as "John assures us," in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, and imagine these Evangelists free from all defect, or bias which could warp their judgments, and then ask yourself, would their narratives be necessarily different from what we find them? If they could not have written as they have, then, of course, we must fall back on some lower



view of inspiration. But if ordinary authors, so endowed with perfect knowledge of the fact, and free from mental and moral defect, might have written such narratives, as we find in the pages of the four Evangelists, then there is nothing in these variations inconsistent with the most complete inspiration.

The popular objection against the inspiration of the Bible, based on the fact that its writers do not use scientific terms, in their references to nature, disappears when it is understood that they were at liberty to use language with the same freedom as other authors. When it is said that the sacred writers, in speaking of the sun standing still on one noted occasion, and of his rising and setting daily, expressly contradict the facts of science, it is strange the objectors do not discover themselves, with unpleasant frequency, contradicting the facts of science when they speak of sunrise and sunset. It is stranger still, that they have never observed that the most noted men of science are quite as much guilty of the contradiction, as the sacred penmen. We turn to one of our greatest American astronomers, and on the first page of his book, we read, "On the approach of the sun to the horizon in the early dawn, his coming is announced by the grey eastern twilight." On the next page, "While this motion continues, the sun at noon, when culminating on the meridian, reaches each day a point less elevated above the horizon, and the diurnal arc or daily path described by the sun grows shorter and shorter:" (Mitchell's Pop. Astron., p. 1, 2.) And must we believe that this astronomer was in profound ignorance of the elementary principles of that science to which he had devoted his life, because, like other people, he speaks of "the daily path described by the sun?" Sir J. Herschel does not hesitate to write: "The sun, which at a considerable altitude always appears round, assumes as it approaches the horizon a flattened or oval outline:"

Outlines of Astron., p. 34. If inspiration involves, as we have endeavoured to show, a two-fold authorship throughout of the Holy Scriptures, so that they are at once completely human and perfectly divine, no objection can be more futile than that which is based on the fact that the sacred writers use popular language in the ordinary sense in which it is employed by mankind at large, and even by our highest scientific authorities.

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